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FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
30th meeting
held on
Monday, 11 November 1991
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 30th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 114: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/46/11 and Add.1 and 2)

1. Mr. EKRA (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the financial crisis of the United Nations was a reflection of the unprecedented economic crisis that was affecting some Member States and preventing them from paying their assessed contributions in full and on time. Côte d'Ivoire, notwithstanding its severe economic problems, had brought itself up to date at the beginning of October with regard to its contribution to the regular budget of the United Nations, a fact which was not reflected in recent documentation.

2. Côte d'Ivoire had no objection to its rate of assessment, but was of the view that assessed contributions should reflect the real capacity to pay of Member States at the time of payment, in determining which greater weight should be given to the most recent economic and financial data available. The scheme of limits to avoid excessive variations in assessed contributions between scales and the use of a 10-year statistical base period in calculating average national income, while reflecting reasonable assumptions, were detrimental to developing countries, which had been suffering from a severe economic crisis for some time. His delegation was fully in favour of debt adjustment, in which connection there was an urgent need to adopt wider-ranging measures.

3. He recalled the recommendations made by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/213, and noted that one way of ensuring that all Member States paid assessed contributions that reflected their capacity to pay was to contain the Organization's budget and reduce certain expenditures, particularly those relating to the hiring of staff.

4. Mr. MONTAÑO (Mexico) said that the scale of assessments reflected a disquieting progression in that it seemed not to relate to Member States' capacity to pay. For example, over the past decade the assessed contributions of the 10 major contributors in Latin America had increased three times faster than the assessed contributions of the States of the European Community, whose economic growth had been higher than that of the Latin American countries.

5. Three years earlier, when the current scale of assessments had been adopted, consensus had been reached on the understanding that a fundamental review of the methodological basis would be conducted. The time had now come to take steps to correct existing imbalances in order to maintain the consensus. Capacity to pay was the fundamental criterion in determining the scale of assessments of the Organization, but the possibility of complementing that principle by additional elements should be considered.

(Mr. Montaño, Mexico)

6. He stressed the importance of the per capita income limit, without which the assessed contributions of Member States would be determined solely on the basis of the size of their economies, without taking into account their relative wealth. In recent years there had been a disquieting and unjustified tendency to minimize the relative weight of the per capita income limit, which had resulted in an increasing concentration of financial obligations on a number of developing countries. He trusted that the Fifth Committee would take action to restore the historical importance of the low per capita income allowance formula.

7. A second element of particular importance to many developing countries was debt adjustment. The General Assembly had acknowledged the seriousness of the external indebtedness of those countries, but the methodology for establishing the scale of assessments still did not fully reflect the magnitude of the problem, and relief on that ground had been extended to the economies of developed countries, thus moving away from the original aim of the measure. He hoped that the debt relief mechanism could be improved to the exclusive benefit of the developing countries.

8. The mitigation process had become a safety valve for the avoidance of basic methodological changes. In response to the shortcomings in the current methodology efforts had been made to reduce imbalances in the scale of assessments by means of a system of transfer of points based on charity and benevolence on the part of richer countries.

9. The scale of assessments must be adjusted in strict accordance with the norms established at the previous session by the General Assembly, which, inter alia, had decided that the benefits of the mitigation process should go to those countries which had suffered from extraordinary circumstances not provided for by other elements of the methodology and that redistribution should be limited to a maximum of two points for each country. That notwithstanding, the Committee on Contributions had recommended a scale of assessments on the basis of dubious criteria that contradicted the will of the General Assembly.

10. In order to increase the transparency of the work of the Committee on Contributions, the content and presentation of its report must be improved and access by interested countries to the statistical information that provided the basis for the Committee's work must be facilitated. There was also a need to review the functioning and membership of the Committee so as to ensure that its work did not assume any political overtones and that its recommendations did not reflect the interests of its more powerful members.

11. Mr. SEZAKI (Japan) said that the principle of capacity to pay must be applied in fairness and equity. His Government had been the target of domestic criticism over the widening gap between the increasingly heavy financial responsibility imposed on Japan and its decision-making power, position and representation within the Organization. In the meantime the

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

total share of the financial burden assumed by the five permanent members of the Security Council had again decreased by more than 200 points, while their decision-making power seemed to have increased with the rapid succession of events following the end of the cold war.

12. His delegation insisted that the anomaly should be corrected so that the assessments of the permanent members of the Security Council were commensurate with their prerogatives and power. The formulation of the scale of assessments was not a mere matter of statistics, but of fairness and equity. His delegation noted with great interest the opinion expressed by the Committee on Contributions in paragraph 48 of its report (A/46/11) on the need to reconsider the methodology in an effort to have Member States look upon their assessed contributions in a more positive light as a reflection of the benefits and privileges of membership.

13. With regard to application of the low per capita income allowance formula, his delegation supported the decision of the Committee on Contributions to raise the upper per capita income limit to $2,600 to reflect the increase in average world per capita income, as explained in paragraph 16 of the Committee's report. Nevertheless, proposals to increase the upper limit must be studied with care in order to maintain the original aim of the adjustment formula and to ensure that in practice it did not benefit middle or intermediate low-income countries.

14. His delegation was of the opinion that the 10-year statistical base period should be retained so as to guarantee stability, continuity and equity in the methodology for determining the scale of assessments.

15. Consideration should be given to whether the floor rate of assessment currently applied to 87 countries (0.01 per cent) was truly consistent with the responsibility of Member States to pay at least a minimal share of the expenses of the Organization and with their equal right to participate in decision-making. If the rate were to be adjusted slightly upwards, except in the case of the least developed countries, it would better accord with the principle of capacity to pay.

16. The extended discussion during the consideration of the modified versions pertaining to the scheme of limits had not made it possible to identify a viable alternative to the current scheme and extend the benefits to a much larger number of Member States, while at the same time easing excessive distorting effects. The scheme of limits had been devised with the aim of avoiding excessive variations in rates of assessment between successive scales. Although it had taken nearly 10 years to design that system, it was clear that since its introduction the system had given rise to distortions as a result of unexpected developments, such as high growth rates sustained over a long period of time by a few countries and rampant fluctuation in foreign exchange rates, which had had an enormous effect on the international economy. It was worth noting in that regard that the report of the Committee

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

on Contributions (A/46/11) concluded that whatever modifications were made in the new machine scale would produce increases in the rates of assessment of the developing countries and decreases in those of the developed countries. Therefore, the only viable and realistic means of speedily reducing the excessive distorting effects caused by the scheme of limits was for the developed countries to provide voluntarily part of the benefits to those countries that were negatively affected by the cumulative effects of the scheme and to those developing countries whose economic difficulties were not dealt with adequately by applying other methodologies of the scale. For that reason, Japan had made an offer of 50 points in order to mitigate the negative effects of the scheme and ensure the inherent validity of the scheme of limits. That offer, which was of a magnitude far beyond that made by any other country in recent years, was conditional upon the understanding that the new scale of assessments would be adopted for a three-year period.

17. Two years earlier, 70 points had been offered for the purpose of mitigation, but at the current time only 26 had been offered. Although the burden had been considerably eased with the accession to membership by the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, it was a source of great concern that developed countries had shown little interest.

18. While some arguments had been advanced against the mitigation methodology, it should be kept in mind that the Committee on Contributions had distributed most of the points offered by Japan by applying the criteria set forth in General Assembly resolution 45/256 and that the method of distributing the remaining points offered was acceptable. Some members of the Committee on Contributions had argued that the number of points offered by Japan was excessive and that the resulting adjustments were not justified in terms of the criteria established by the General Assembly. He believed that that argument was not valid and stressed that the concern felt by developing countries about the mitigation methodology could have been eased to a considerable extent if there had been as many offers from other industrialized countries as on the previous occasion.

19. With regard to the assessments of new Member States, those States should honour their external commitments and respect the rates of assessment which the Committee on Contributions calculated and recommended to the General Assembly for adoption. They would have the opportunity to apply for appropriate changes in their rates of assessment at a later date.

20. Referring to the information meeting held by the Committee on Contributions to give Member States the opportunity to submit additional information in order to make ad hoc adjustments, his delegation reiterated its opinion that it was necessary to return to the practice of submitting written representations.

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

21. The Committee on Contributions was a technical body and, as such, must follow the guidance of the General Assembly and advise it on how to fix and revise the scale of assessments for Member States. Those basic roles should be maintained and the General Assembly should support the recommendations made by that Committee under its direction. In that regard, his delegation fully supported the scale of assessments recommended by the Committee on Contributions and stressed that it should be adopted on a three-year basis, namely, for the period 1992-1994.

22. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the 12 member States of the European Community, said that the scale of assessments was clearly not an instrument for transferring income from one country to another since the United Nations budget was insignificant compared to the global gross domestic product. Although the scale of assessments was one of the most important agenda items, it should be kept in mind that a considerable part of the activities of the United Nations was financed by voluntary contributions.

23. The Twelve collectively provided more than 30 per cent of the contributions to the regular budget and peace-keeping operations and, more importantly, they paid their assessments promptly and in full.

24. It was a matter of concern that over the years, the debate on the scale of assessments had deteriorated into a defensive discussion about each country's own financial interests. It was hoped that the Fifth Committee would be able to adopt a scale of assessments for the next three years in a spirit of cooperation with due regard for the seriousness of the matter, while keeping a sensible perspective of the relative size of the regular budget of the United Nations and the contribution by each Member State to it.

25. In view of the complexity of its task under General Assembly resolution 45/256, the Committee on Contributions should be commended for the transparency of its report and the candid manner in which it reported on its deliberations. The Fifth Committee should not seek to duplicate the work of that expert body.

26. The Committee on Contributions had submitted to the Fifth Committee a scale of assessments drawn up on the basis of General Assembly resolution 45/256. It should be recalled that the Twelve had made major concessions on important methodological aspects so that the resolution could be adopted by consensus. The Twelve attached great value to improving the methodology for the preparation of future scales of assessment in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 4 of resolution 45/256 A.

27. The capacity of Member States to pay must remain the fundamental basis for drawing up the scale of assessments. The basic criterion for determining that capacity was the data on national income to be provided by all States. All further refinements should be based on reliable data and should be transparent and aim at eliminating distorting elements that had made the

(Mr. Spaans, Netherlands)

current system increasingly complex. Furthermore, the scale of assessments should be established for an adequate period of time and based on a stable and predictable system.

28. The Twelve would like to make a clear distinction between, on the one hand, the proposed scale and its methodology and, on the other hand, the new methodology needed to establish in the future a scale that would better reflect the principle of capacity to pay; improving the methodology for determining the scale of assessments required the progressive elimination of the all the complicating and distorting elements that had been introduced, sometimes for political reasons. Nevertheless, since the Committee on Contributions had by and large followed the guidelines set forth in resolution 45/256, the Twelve were prepared in principle to endorse the proposed scale in a spirit of compromise that should be shared by all other delegations. It was unfortunate, however, that the General Assembly, which repeatedly affirmed its commitment to a scale that was relatively easy to understand, had added in the course of time one complicating and distorting element after another. The debate in the Committee on Contributions reflected the complexity of the current methodology and underscored the need to improve it.

29. According to the report of the Committee on Contributions (A/46/11), the adjustment of the per capita income level to $2,600 resulted in a redistribution of over 800 points. While the Twelve believe that the scale of assessments was not an instrument for the transfer of income from one country to another, they would be willing to consider the adoption of that increase at the maximum limit, provided that the new scale was adopted for a period of three years and that further distorting elements would be eliminated from the current methodology.

30. General Assembly resolution 45/256 requested the Committee on Contributions to continue its work on the improvement of the methodology for the preparation of future scales, with regard to the application of debt-adjusted income. The current formula appeared to give greater relief to countries with large outstanding debts rather than those which had repaid some or all of their external debts. That formula was nothing more than an ad hoc mechanism and should be abolished in the future since national income already fully reflected payment of interest. Moreover, debt adjustment was the only element in the current formula which was future-oriented rather than retrospective.

31. The 10-year statistical base period evened out the impact of abrupt or short-lived variations in national income and that would obviate the need for a scheme of limits. The scheme, which resulted in the redistribution of 380 points in the proposed scale, was a distorting factor in the current methodology; therefore, serious consideration should be given to the possibility of abolishing it in the future.

(Mr. Spaans, Netherlands)

32. With regard to mitigation, it was regrettable that the Committee on Contributions had not used the criteria specified in paragraph 42 of its report, as it had been requested to do under General Assembly resolution 45/256. He wished to point out that the Member States which in the past had offered points to other States had ceased doing so, with one exception. That was a clear indication that ad hoc adjustments were no longer considered desirable by Member States.

33. The new scale should be established for a period of at least three years in accordance with the rules of procedure.

34. With regard to other aspects of possible future adjustments in the current methodology, the Committee on Contributions had pointed out in paragraph 41 of its report that "the large-scale distortions of the capacity to pay inherent in the application of the floor and ceiling rates are manifest". The discussion of the relative distortion caused by the various elements in the method was complicated by the fact that distortions might be different if the sequence of adjustments had been changed. The application of price-adjusted rates of exchange appeared premature since there were still no verifiable and comparable data. For the sake of stability, it was better not to change the statistical base period, even though that would not produce the most favourable result for all the members of the European Community.

35. The Twelve noted the careful consideration given to the question of exchange rates in the proposed scale of assessments. It seemed that the most appropriate solution would be to apply the rate which the organizations of the United Nations system had been required to use for local expenditures in the countries concerned during each year in the statistical base period.

36. The Twelve would submit a proposal to be included in the resolution on that agenda item that the General Assembly should deal with the item only two out of every three sessions: once a three-year scale had been adopted, there would be no need for a debate on the item during the first year of its application. In the second year, the General Assembly would provide the Committee on Contributions with guidelines for drawing up a new scale, which could be adopted in the following, third, year.

37. It might be necessary to stress that the unexpected admission of new States Members of the United Nations should be taken into account in considering the scale of assessments.

38. The Twelve were committed to negotiate on that important agenda item in a spirit of cooperation and consensus and believed that a resolution should be adopted that would allow for considerable improvements in the methodology of the scale of assessments. The scale should reflect not only the capacity of all Member States to pay, but also their duty to assume their share of the Organization's expenses.

AGENDA ITEM 115: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/46/370, A/46/377, A/C.5/46/2, A/C.5/46/4 and Add.1, A/C.5/46/7, 9, 13, 16, 21)

39. Mr. BARIMANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the principle of equitable geographical distribution was the most important principle relating to the composition of the Secretariat and was in keeping with the need to ensure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. The practical application of that principle would increase confidence in and support for the Secretariat and improve its functioning. Nevertheless, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/46/370), the number of underrepresented and overrepresented States had increased. The number of unrepresented and underrepresented States in the region of the Middle East had remained unchanged.

40. Although it was a positive sign that the number of the unrepresented States had decreased, more should be done to achieve the objectives laid down in General Assembly resolution 45/239 A. The Islamic Republic of Iran, which was among the countries that were not adequately represented, requested the Secretary-General to make every effort to recruit nationals from Member States which were not yet represented within their desirable range.

41. The Secretary-General had pointed out that membership, population and contribution were the main criteria necessary to ensure an equitable distribution of posts among Member States (A/C.5/46/2, para. 34). In addition, the General Assembly, in part III of its resolution 42/220 A, stressed the concept of achieving parity between the membership and contribution factors and the importance of giving due consideration to raising the percentage weight of the population factor. In that regard, his delegation asked for restoration of the previous distribution formula, namely 7.2 per cent for the population factor. Option K, described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/46/2, para. 32 and annex) could constitute a sound basis for achieving that goal.

42. Representation of Member States at the senior and policy-formulating levels of the Secretariat was one of the most critical aspects of personnel questions. Candidates from all Member States should have equal opportunities when appointments were made to those posts. In accordance with recommendations 47 and 54 of the Group of 18 (A/41/49), the Secretary-General should take additional measures to ensure that nationals of developing countries were duly represented at senior levels and should not extend, as a rule, the service of under-secretaries-general and assistant secretaries-general for a period exceeding 10 years since it would be in the best interests of the Organization to renew periodically the leadership of Departments and Offices. Although his delegation was pleased to see an increase in the percentage of staff from developing countries at the D-1 level, at the same time it was concerned that the percentage at the D-2 level and above had decreased for developing countries, while it had increased for other countries. Posts should not be considered the exclusive preserve of any Member States or group of States. His delegation was of the view that the

(Mr. Barimani, Islamic Republic of Iran)

candidates from developing countries had not been given equal opportunities for appointment to posts in the upper echelons. Therefore, he fully supported the rotation of the high-level posts of assistant secretary-general and under-secretary-general.

43. His delegation attached great importance to the representation of women in the Secretariat and noted that the percentage of women had increased by almost 1 per cent (A/46/377, para. 12). He hoped that the Secretariat would intensify its efforts to reach the objective of 30 per cent by the end of 1991 and fully supported the goal of 35 per cent by 1995 (A/46/377, para. 1). It was also hoped that the Secretary-General, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/239 C, would continue his efforts to increase the number of women in posts subject to geographical distribution, particularly in senior policy-level and decision-making posts, and that he would accord priority to the participation of women from developing countries, in particular at the D-1 level and above. Since the percentage of women from certain regions was particularly low (A/46/377, para. 13), due consideration should be given to those regions when making appointments.

44. A career development plan would be submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. His delegation supported recommendation 51 of the Group of 18 (A/41/49) and believed that a comprehensive career development plan would increase motivation, competence and efficiency in the Secretariat.

45. The question of respect for the privileges and immunities of United Nations officials was very important and it was regrettable that the number of new cases of arrest and detention of officials remained high (A/C.5/46/4). In spite of the appeal made by the General Assembly in resolution 45/240, the number of UNRWA staff arrested or detained had remained conspicuously high and there were still a large number of officials in detention in the occupied territories. Moreover, the Agency continued to encounter difficulties in the movement of its staff into and out of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Secretary-General should give priority to following up cases of arrest and detention and other matters relating to the security and proper functioning of UNRWA as well as other agencies.

46. Adequate training was a basic means of strengthening and enhancing the quality of United Nations personnel. For reasons of cost effectiveness, local training facilities should be used in training and retraining the staff of the various duty stations.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
31st meeting
held on
Tuesday, 12 November 1991
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 31st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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AGENDA ITEM 108: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued)

First reading (continued)

Section 32. Conference services

Section 33. Administration and management

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18 November 1991

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 107: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued) (A/46/6/Rev.1 and A/46/7)

AGENDA ITEM 108: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/46/16 and Add.1)

First reading (continued)

Section 32. Conference services

1. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that one document which would have implications for section 32 was still not available, namely, the report on conference services in Vienna, in which the Secretary-General would propose the establishment of a separate United Nations conference service there in 1993. Another document relevant to the section was the report on the optical disc storage and retrieval system (A/C.5/46/26), which the Advisory Committee would be considering in the near future. As he had indicated when section 4 was considered a third document which should be taken up under section 32 and which, it was hoped, would soon be ready was the report on editorial services under the Division of General Assembly Affairs.

2. Section 32 was important in terms both of the size of the estimate and of the services involved. Although no statistics were given, the amount requested for temporary assistance was based on the pattern of past expenditures. The estimate for general temporary assistance (A/46/6/Rev.1, para. 32.60) included a non-recurrent provision of $566,800 required in connection with the elimination of the backlog in printing the Treaty Series. More would probably be requested for the same purpose in the biennium 1994-1995. There were proposals to create four posts and to reclassify 19 in section 32.

3. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee's recommendations in chapter I of its report (A/46/7) affected the temporary assistance for meetings proposed under section 32, but only as a technical recalculation of its amount, not as a reduction in real terms. It was not the Advisory Committee's intention that the services financed from temporary assistance should be reduced and they would be provided at the level proposed by the Secretary-General.

4. There was a question whether the rate of real growth of 0.2 per cent calculated for section 32 was realistic, because the classification of some of the proposed expenditure as non-recurrent was not justified. In the case of Vienna, in particular, non-recurrent items covered services that would continue to be provided and the rate of real growth would be higher if that was recognized (A/46/7, para. 32.33).

(Mr. Mselle)

5. The Advisory Committee had discussed New York's requirements with the Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments and it appeared that control, management and supervision of the services provided were somewhat hampered by the factors mentioned in paragraph 32.6 of its report. However, it trusted that measures would be taken by programme managers to enhance productivity in the sectors under their supervision.

6. The Advisory Committee recommended against the proposed maintenance of the global provision of over $3 million in temporary assistance for meetings for the reasons given in paragraphs 32.7 to 32.9 of its report. On the other hand, it recommended approval of 12 of the 13 proposals for post reclassification in New York. But he drew particular attention to the Advisory Committee's comments in paragraph 32.12 on the reclassification of three interpreter posts, which demonstrated a piecemeal approach to the problem of career development that should be reviewed.

7. The Advisory Committee had recommended against the provision requested to provide electronic meetings announcement displays at key locations in the Secretariat (A/46/7, para. 32.13), but was concerned by the delay in installing the very important optical disc system. In view of the delay in implementing phase I of the project and the fact that the estimate for phase II was preliminary, the Advisory Committee recommended in paragraph 32.15 of its report that the estimate be reduced to $1 million. In paragraph 32.23 of its report, the Advisory Committee made a number of comments on the introduction of new technology, including the optical disc project. It trusted that the introduction of such technological advances would result in increased productivity in conference services.

8. In paragraph 32.19 of its report, the Advisory Committee gave its reasons for believing, on the basis of experience, that the resources requested for external printing in the biennium 1992-1993 could be reduced by $1,878,500.

9. Turning to the estimate for conference and library services in Geneva, the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the proposals affecting posts, with the exception of a proposed reclassification from P-3 to P-4. But it did not agree with the proposal to redeploy two General Service posts which had been made obsolete by technological developments and should be abolished.

10. The Advisory Committee had deferred its consideration of the estimates for conference and library services at Vienna, pending receipt of the report requested of the Secretary-General on the result of the consideration of his proposal to establish a unified United Nations/UNIDO conference service there.

11. Mr. COHEN (United States of America) said that his delegation appreciated the fine work of the Department of Conference Services but believed that its structure and working methods could be improved, making it possible to raise the quality of conference services while using fewer resources. To that end, his delegation had proposed an in-depth study of the Department by an outside

(Mr. Cohen, United States)

management consultant. It hoped that the General Assembly would approve its proposal because all Member States had an interest in efforts to streamline and rationalize the Department.

12. Section 32 did not reflect the Organization's total expenditure on conference servicing and his delegation would like the Secretariat to provide a table showing all regular budget expenditures for that purpose. The section for the Department of Conference Services in future budget proposals should include such a table indicating the level of resources requested for conference servicing under other sections.

13. The budget proposals appeared to pay insufficient heed to the concerns expressed by the General Assembly and the Advisory Committee about workloads in the Department. His delegation doubted the Secretary-General's claim that the workload had increased overall. It wished to know if the staffing levels for editorial and official records services had been adjusted downwards to match the substantial drop in their output indicated by table 32.16 of the budget proposals. There had also been a modest decline in the workload of the translation services at Headquarters, while the projected workloads for editing, typing and translation at Geneva in 1992-1993 were lower than the levels for 1984-1985. His delegation would have expected significant reductions in staffing levels in those areas, given the substantial investment made in modern technology and the long-term decline in the workload there.

14. The trend in document publishing was less favourable, with the Secretary-General projecting an increase of more than a quarter in the number of documents distributed at Headquarters. His delegation would appreciate an explanation for the increase, given that the comparable level for Geneva in the next biennium was only slightly higher than that reported for 1984-1985.

15. His delegation believed that workload standards for DCS staff did not reflect the gains that should have come about with the use of modern technologies. The standards approved at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly were only a first step towards greater productivity. Paragraph 32.22 of the Advisory Committee's report implied that internal translation services might be less cost-effective than contractual services. His delegation believed that the Department should make more use of the latter in order to reduce the level of permanent staff, and consider the possibility of using contractual services in low-cost countries, with translations being faxed to headquarters locations for reproduction.

16. His delegation hoped that the report of the Secretary-General on conference services in Vienna would give some indication of progress towards the establishment of unified service there. It was concerned by the Advisory Committee's finding that the classification of expenditures on conference servicing in Vienna resulted in the level of real growth in the proposed programme budget being understated, and it wished to know what the rate of real growth would be if those expenditures had been properly classified.

17. Mr. KARBUCZKY (Hungary) said that his delegation considered the underfunding of conference services in Vienna to be a serious problem which should be tackled sooner rather than later. It therefore agreed with the position taken by the Advisory Committee in paragraphs 32.36 and 32.37 of its report. It also agreed with the Advisory Committee that the costs of conference services in Vienna would be recurrent and could not be classified as non-recurrent. It believed that the level of temporary assistance required to provide interpretation services in Vienna would justify the establishment of a second team of interpreters there. Such a team would be more cost-effective and efficient than the current practice of making permanent use of freelance interpreters.

18. Ms. ROTHEISER (Austria) said that her delegation regretted the consistent underfunding of conference services in Vienna in the past and was not convinced that the provisions for 1992-1993 would be sufficient. It agreed with the Advisory Committee that the $6.3 million requested by the Secretary-General to redress the situation would be a recurrent cost and wondered if the establishment of a second team of interpreters in Vienna might not be more cost-effective than continuing to depend heavily on temporary assistance. It would be grateful for detailed information from the Secretariat in that regard. It would also like to know when the report of the Secretary-General on the outcome of the consultations on the possibility of establishing a unified conference service at the Vienna International Centre would be available.

19. The outcome of those consultations would not affect the need for more temporary assistance at the Vienna International Centre. Her delegation therefore believed that the amount requested for general temporary assistance would be needed in any event. It also had the impression that, if the cuts recommended by the Advisory Committee were applied, section 32 would be doubly affected by across-the-board cuts and cuts in temporary assistance. It would be grateful for clarification from the Secretariat as to whether that was correct and what effect such huge cuts would have on conference servicing in Vienna.

20. Her delegation would revert to the subject of conference services in Vienna at a later stage but would endorse the Secretary-General's very modest budget estimates in first reading, even if they might prove to be inadequate.

21. Mr. WU Gang (China) said that despite the provision in the current regular budget to increase the number of posts in the Chinese Unit of the Official Records Editing Section to nine, the Unit would not be set up until January 1992. His delegation wished to know the reason for the delay and what was being done to solve the problem if, as suggested, it was an alleged lack of office space. His delegation was concerned by the delays experienced in the translation of Chinese documents and believed that they could be remedied if the necessary staff and resources were provided.

22. Mr. MORDACQ (France) stressed the importance of the work of the Department of Conference Services and commended it on its remarkable performance in handling the increased workload generated by recent major events. In its analysis of section 32, the Advisory Committee had in general made a useful distinction between "productivity" investments and what might be called "comfort" investments. While productivity investments would eventually lead to gains in productivity and consequent savings, comfort investments would not and were inappropriate in times of budgetary stringency. In that spirit, ACABQ had quite rightly not recommended approval of funding for the requested electronic meetings announcement displays.

23. In contrast, the optical disc project was an excellent productivity investment, since it would greatly reduce the Organization's printing requirements and would all but eliminate the need to send documents by post or diplomatic pouch. It was therefore all the more difficult to understand why ACABQ had recommended reducing appropriations for phase II of the project simply because of the delay in implementing phase I. Now that the contract had finally been awarded, the company selected would be able to move quickly to implement both phases. It was also not logical to recommend a general reduction based on underutilization of resources when dealing with a non-recurrent expenditure. If the Advisory Committee's recommendations were followed, the project in question would be subjected to both general and specific reductions, a practice that was to be avoided on principle.

24. Translation services were also in need of productivity-oriented investment. He was glad that the representative of the United States had referred to the problem of work quality. In area of translation, both work quality and productivity were suffering for lack of sufficient funds to implement a computer information system. A related problem was the vacancy situation in the French Service, which was reducing French translation output. Understandably, many candidates who had qualified prior to the hiring freeze had accepted posts elsewhere by the end of the freeze. However, after the competitive examination in 1990, owing to inefficient recruitment procedures, it had taken 15 months to extend offers of employment to those who had passed. By that time, many of the successful candidates had once again been unavailable.

25. Mr. TEIRLINCK (Belgium) strongly supported the statement of the representative of France, particularly with regard to the optical disc system, and stressed the comments of the Secretary-General in paragraph 18 of his report on that subject (A/C.5/46/26). The reduction proposed in paragraph 32.15 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/46/7) would eliminate an important part of the project, namely, the installation of retrieval workstations to increase the number of users. He had serious reservations about the practice of reducing appropriations for non-recurrent projects. Having made the commitment in General Assembly resolution 45/248, the Organization had every reason to move forward as quickly as possible, since the effect of delay could only be negative. In many countries, including Belgium, it was customary to appropriate funds for an entire project from its

(Mr. Teirlinck, Belgium)

outset in order to ensure continuity of implementation. For all of those reasons, the original funding levels and timetable for the project should be maintained.

26. Mr. BELKHAIR (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) stressed the importance of conference services to the Organization's role as a forum for international consultations and negotiations. In view of the size of the estimates under section 32, it was essential to optimize allocation and use of the necessary resources. His delegation urged all United Nations bodies to make optimum use of conferences services by determining their needs more precisely and called on the Committee on Conferences to refine its methodology for calculating the utilization rate. Libya underscored the need to improve the organization of work and the distribution of meetings between the three main duty stations. It also attached great importance to placing all the working languages on an equal footing with respect to translation and interpretation and supported the efforts of the Secretariat in that direction.

27. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) agreed with the Chairman of ACABQ that the $6.3 million expenditure for so-called non-recurrent items at Vienna should be reclassified as recurrent, bringing the real rate of growth for section 32 to about 2 per cent. He shared the views expressed by the representative of the United States regarding the need for more accurate workload statistics. There was in fact no clear proof of a trend of increasing requests for conference services. It was necessary to take a careful look at how the Secretariat arrived at its projections. In view of the heavy workload of the Fifth Committee and ACABQ, his delegation wondered whether the Committee on Conferences might be asked to undertake that examination.

28. On the question of unified conference services for the United Nations organizations at the Vienna International Centre, he noted that, at its July meeting, the Industrial Development Board of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) had decided to defer action on the Secretary-General's proposal until the organizations concerned had had a chance to study a detailed cost analysis. His delegation fully supported the establishment of unified services provided that, as it believed, doing so would not entail any increase in total cost. He hoped that a mutually acceptable solution could be found so that the General Assembly could take the necessary decisions.

29. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that, while there was no doubt about the importance of giving the United Nations the resources it needed to fulfil its role as an international forum, it was necessary to be realistic. The proposed appropriations under section 32 represented more than the calculated 0.2 per cent real growth rate and more than the United Nations could afford. The Department of Conference Services was not to blame for that state of affairs. Despite the conclusion of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts that too many meetings and conferences were being held for Member States to be able to participate profitably, the reductions mandated in

(Mr. Kinchen, United Kingdom)

General Assembly resolution 41/213 had been only partially implemented for conference services. Also, all United Nations bodies needed to make every effort to improve the accuracy of their estimated requirements for conference services. While he agreed that the diversity of languages should be respected, there were more languages than there were States, and it was necessary to achieve a reasonable balance.

30. His delegation thought that it should be possible to present conference services requirements more transparently in the proposed programme budget. For example, it would like to know what savings had been achieved in conference servicing following the termination of the work of the Council for Namibia. Given the format of the budget document, it was doubtful whether the Secretariat could provide a precise answer.

31. With respect to requests to fund capital expenditures, his delegation wondered whether, given the Organization's notorious cash-flow problems, it was appropriate to allocate resources for any more than what was absolutely necessary, such as emergency repairs. That was especially true in view of the difficulty of quantifying gains in productivity referred to in chapter I of the report of ACABQ. Nevertheless, his delegation was prepared to proceed on the basis of the technical recommendations of the competent committee. He did, however, wonder whether the optical disc system was proven and ready for installation or whether it had yet to be tried.

32. He wished to correct a misunderstanding that had arisen during debate on the pattern of conferences regarding his delegation's position on decision 1991/295 of the Economic and Social Council. His delegation had favoured restoring the entitlement of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs summary record coverage of its meetings and was convinced that the production of summary records represented a priority use of limited resources in respect of that body.

33. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), replying to questions raised in the discussion, said that the Secretariat would provide a table indicating estimated expenditures for conference servicing under other budget sections, as requested by the United States delegation. Regarding the savings that would arise from the fact that the independence of Namibia was no longer on the United Nations agenda, the current global presentation of the programme budget made such calculations difficult, although not impossible, and he took the point made by the United Kingdom representative that a greater degree of transparency was required both in section 32 and in other sections of the budget document. Concerning the recommendation of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts aimed at a reduction in the number of meetings, it had to be recognized that the life of the Organization and the way it had evolved more recently made it impossible to implement that recommendation.

(Mr. Baudot)

34. A number of specific questions had been asked about workload statistics which he would endeavour to answer during the informal consultations. For the time being, he would simply note that there was a considerable backlog particularly in the editorial services. The documentation to be provided by the Secretariat might not offer a solution in that regard but it would show the dimension of the problem.

35. The documentation would also contain proposals on the strengthening of conference servicing at the Vienna International Centre. The Secretariat was not, however, convinced that it would be cost-effective to establish a second team of interpreters at Vienna. The report to be issued by the Secretary-General on the outcome of consultations between the United Nations, UNIDO and IAEA on a unified conference-servicing facility would indicate the desirability of such a facility, but as the negotiations had not yet been completed it was proposed to establish a separate United Nations conference service at Vienna, in accordance with the decision already taken by the Fifth Committee in that regard.

36. The designation of some proposed expenditures as non-recurrent had been justified in view of the uncertainties about future arrangements with UNIDO. The documentation to be made available shortly would present those items as recurrent and cost estimates would be given. They, of course, could be expected to be higher than the figures shown in the proposed programme budget. Lastly, in response to the question raised by the representative of China, he wished to point out that the reason for the delay in establishing a Chinese Unit in the Official Records Editing Section in New York had not been lack of office space but difficulties of recruitment. He could confirm that the posts would be filled by 1 January 1992 and fully expected the Unit to be operational from that time.

37. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $422,900,500 under section 32 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 32 would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

Section 33. Administration and management

Section 33A. Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management

38. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, as indicated in paragraph 33A.4 of its report (A/46/7), the Advisory Committee regretted that the Secretary-General's submission did not contain specific information on costs for staff union activities, bearing in mind the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 21 of its resolution 45/239 A.

(Mr. Mselle)

39. In paragraphs 33A.6 and 7 of its report, the Advisory Committee commented on the integrated management information system and expressed its serious concern about the delay in the implementation of the system and that the approved total costs of $28 million at 1988 rates were projected to increase to $34.4 million at 1992-1993 rates taking account of inflation. The recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the integrated system were similar to those it had made with regard to the optical disk system and on which the representative of France had commented. The Advisory Committee recognized that both projects were important in supporting the activities of the Organization, but that did not mean that it should not examine the cost estimates carefully. Moreover, in the event of a delay, it could in no way justify the appropriation of resources that would not be fully utilized. The Advisory Committee's recommendation in paragraph 33A.7 of its report did not prevent the Secretary-General from entering into contracts and proceeding with the implementation of the project. The Committee would consider a request for additional funds, if necessary, in the context of the progress report to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session. It was not, therefore, opposed to the project and was simply advocating an orderly provision of resources on the basis of the progress of work.

40. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that his delegation had, like the Advisory Committee, noted the absence of information on the cost of staff union activities in the proposed programme budget and would appreciate confirmation from the Secretariat as to when that information would be available for consideration during the informal consultations. As it had indicated in its general statement, his delegation did not believe that it was appropriate for Member States to finance the costs of staff union activities. The Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts had taken the same position and had recommended the termination of all regular budget funding for that purpose. His delegation would therefore propose that action be taken at the forty-sixth session to eliminate such funding completely.

41. While it was not opposed to staff union activities as such, his delegation did not believe that Member States should finance the cost of activities that were generally aimed at overturning or undermining the resolutions of the General Assembly. Furthermore, it did not believe that it was appropriate for staff unions to issue statements and publications criticizing certain Member States and at the same time insist that those same Member States pay the related costs. One such publication, containing implied criticism of the Permanent Representative of the United States, had appeared only recently and he wondered how it had been financed.

42. Mr. MORDACQ (France) requested information on the application to the Integrated Management Information System of the procedure outlined in paragraph 12 (a) of the Secretary-General's report on the question of unliquidated obligations (A/46/404), whereby appropriated funds were placed in a separate account, allowing unexpended balances to be carried forward into succeeding bienniums until certain projects of a multiyear nature were completed.

43. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that his delegation shared the concerns expressed by the Advisory Committee with regard to implementation of the first phase of the Integrated Management Information System. It was also concerned that proper accounting procedures should have been followed when redeploying resources from the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) and the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG).

44. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that he would put the United States delegation's request for information on staff union activities to the appropriate authority immediately after the meeting. In accordance with the suggestion by the Advisory Committee, a report would be issued shortly on the Integrated Management Information System containing projected expenditures for 1991 and requirements for the biennium 1992-1993. Lastly, he would endeavour to comply with the request of the representative of France during the informal consultations and would also provide information as soon as possible on the point raised by the representative of Japan concerning the peace-keeping account.

45. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $12,405,600 under section 33A of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 33A would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

Section 33B. Office of Human Resources Management

46. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) indicated that the growth calculated for section 33B was attributable to the proposed increase in resources for staff training in the Secretariat.

47. Mr. WU Gang (China) said that human resources management was a most important factor in any organization, and particularly in the United Nations, which faced a growing number of new challenges. His delegation trusted that adequate resources would be made available to the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), but at the same time wished to emphasize the need to achieve savings and improve efficiency wherever possible.

48. His delegation noted from table 33B.5 of the Secretary-General's submission that the number of established regular budget posts would remain unchanged and felt that the proposed post reclassifications were justified. It shared the views expressed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 33B.5 of its report (A/46/7) concerning the current proportion of extrabudgetary posts to the total establishment for OHRM and welcomed the study regarding the distribution of posts financed from regular budget and extrabudgetary resources.

49. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that his delegation continued to question the funding of the language training programmes in Moscow and Beijing and was pleased to note that some progress had been achieved towards reducing the costs of those activities. It looked forward to receiving the Secretary-General's report on that subject.

50. His delegation was very troubled by the findings of the Advisory Committee with respect to the proportion of regular budget and extrabudgetary posts financed under section 33B and would like to know when the study mentioned in paragraph 33B.5 of the ACABQ report would be completed and submitted to Member States.

51. It appeared from paragraph 33B.72 of the Secretary-General's submission that the funding was provided under the regular budget for a number of services related to the United Nations International School (UNIS). As a private institution, its total operating costs should be borne by the parents sending their children to that school. His delegation would appreciate receiving information on what staffing and related resources might be made available to UNIS. If regular budget funding was provided, his delegation would propose that it be terminated at the end of 1991.

52. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) observed that recommendation 43 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts, concerning the recruitment of Professional staff through national competitive examinations, appeared to have been well applied in respect of posts at the P-1 and P-2 levels but not for posts at the P-3 level. His delegation would welcome information on steps taken by the Secretary-General to ensure full implementation of that recommendation. With regard to staff training, he noted from paragraph 33B.52 of the budget document that the respective part of subprogramme 3 would focus on the development and implementation of core training programmes that would ensure a common foundation of skills throughout the Secretariat in priority areas. In that regard, his delegation looked forward to more concrete proposals from the Secretary-General covering peace-keeping operations. Lastly, his delegation noted the views expressed by the United States representative concerning the Moscow and Beijing language training programmes and the Advisory Committee's comments on the distribution of posts financed from the established regular budget and from extrabudgetary resources.

53. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that if there was any support for the United Nations International School (UNIS) under the regular budget, it was extremely limited. He believed that only one General Service post was involved. The issue raised by the representative of Japan regarding national competitive examinations at the P-3 level should be dealt with in greater detail under the item on personnel questions. The results of the measures taken to implement General Assembly resolution 45/239 had yet to be seen. It would become apparent in the light of developments in 1992 whether the Secretariat was in a position to implement the recommendation of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts with the resources requested in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993. He

regretted that he was not yet in a position to answer the question about the distribution of extrabudgetary posts and regular budget posts as the relevant report was not yet completed.

54. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that his delegation recognized that virtually all the costs of UNIS were funded from outside the regular budget but it had understood that one post connected with the school was funded from the regular budget. If that was the case, his delegation would propose that that provision should be terminated at the end of 1991.

55. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $30,654,300 under section 33B of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 33B would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

Section 33C. Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Finance

56. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that his delegation was concerned about the ratio of posts funded from the regular budget to extrabudgetary posts in the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Finance, which according to table 33C.11, was about 2 to 1. He asked whether the Secretariat believed that that distribution was adequate to requirements as far as support for peace-keeping operations was concerned, whether the Office was fully reimbursed for expenses incurred in that connection, and whether extra staff, to be paid for out of extrabudgetary resources, was needed.

57. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) said that paragraph 33C.3 of the Advisory Committee's report contained a table showing the proposals of the Secretary-General for reclassifications. In most cases in the budget, the need for reclassification was attributed to increased workloads. Perhaps that was not the criterion in section 33C, but it seemed unlikely that there had not been some expansion of the workload. The Office was perhaps being unduly modest and his delegation urged the Secretariat to provide more information when the requests for reclassification were considered in the informal consultations.

58. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that, in the absence of precise workload standards, it was difficult for him to say that the Office's workload was too high. He believed that it was true that there was more work in relation to extrabudgetary programmes, including support for peace-keeping operations. He would present all the available information on the proposed reclassifications during the informal consultations.

59. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation of $25,106,000 under section 33C of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 33C would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

Section 33D. Office of General Services

60. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) regretted that, unfortunately, the Acting Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management and Assistant Secretary-General for General Services was unable to attend the current meeting. He would probably wish to comment when section 33D was taken up in informal consultations.

61. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, as in the past, the Advisory Committee had made a careful examination of section 33D. The recommendations made in chapter 1 of its report and under section 33D had resulted in a recommended estimate of $206,115,000. The question of performance indicators, commented on by the Advisory Committee in previous years, had not yet been fully addressed and the Committee referred to it again in paragraphs 33D.7 and 33D.8. Wherever they could actually be defined, performance indicators were useful for facilitating the exercise of estimating the resources required and the Advisory Committee therefore urged that the issue should be vigorously addressed in future budget estimates. Also, in future submissions, indicators should be presented in such a way as to permit comparison between bienniums.

62. Regarding the telecommunications services, the Advisory Committee had noted that the Plenipotentiary Conference of ITU had agreed to authorize the United Nations to offer telecommunications services to the specialized agencies, which were to be allowed to participate in the telecommunications network on a voluntary basis. The Committee had been informed that a strategy paper was to be prepared on future action by the United Nations to enhance telecommunications capacity for its own use and in order to offer comparable services to the specialized agencies. The Advisory Committee would present its recommendations on that paper when it was submitted to the General Assembly.

63. The status of technological innovations was an important aspect of the activities covered by section 33D and the Advisory Committee commented on that topic in paragraphs 33D.15 to 33D.17 of its report. It expressed the view that, in the area of procurement of microcomputers, a greater effort was needed to ensure that the equipment purchased was appropriate to the function to be carried out and that every effort was made to avoid the acquisition of excess capacity. Security requirements were commented on in paragraph 33D.19, where the Advisory Committee recommended against the proposal for additional X-ray machines for 1992-1993. Paragraph 33D.20 dealt with proposed reclassifications, one of which was recommended and one was not.

64. Paragraphs 33D.34, 33D.35 and 33D.36 dealt with facilities management, maintenance and utilities. The Committee's recommendations would lead to a reduction of $649,900 in the estimate for utilities and $500,000 in the estimate for rental and maintenance of premises. It continued to be concerned that the regular budget was not always adequately reimbursed for the rent and maintenance of premises used for activities financed from extrabudgetary funds and recommended that efforts should be made to secure such reimbursement.

65. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) expressed concern at the large increase in the estimates for rent and maintenance. The comments of the Advisory Committee in paragraph 33D.34 were very pertinent in that connection. He recalled that one premise of the budget outline had been that growth in non-recurrent expenditure should be linked to approved projects. There was a link between that and the section of the budget on improvements and major maintenance. For most national administrations, whose resources were limited, any increase in capital expenditure on one project was normally balanced by a decrease in respect of others. The United Nations was experiencing financial difficulties and he questioned whether it was appropriate, at a time when two thirds of Member States were in arrears in their contributions to the regular budget, to request additional appropriations for capital expenditures. His delegation, of course, recognized the necessity to make adequate provision for operating costs, including rent and security and the cost of telecommunications. However, the general policy of restraint should apply to capital expenditure on the telecommunications network before it was adequately justified through cost-benefit analysis.

66. It was his understanding that the points raised in formal meetings of the Committee would be explored in informal consultations, but that no additional points would be raised.

67. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that the regular budget should not be used to subsidize extrabudgetary programmes. The budget of the Office of General Services appeared to provide for a very substantial subsidy to such programmes. As the Advisory Committee pointed out, the United Nations was reimbursed very little for office space assigned to technical cooperation activities. Despite an earlier recommendation by the Advisory Committee that reimbursements should be increased, no action had been taken. A similar request had been made by the General Assembly in resolution 44/201 B, section XIII. His delegation, therefore, looked forward to receiving the Secretary-General's report on the question of costs borne by the regular budget in support of extrabudgetary programmes. It might be unable to support an appropriation for section 33D as a whole in second reading, unless upward adjustments were made in reimbursements for office space occupied by extrabudgetary programmes.

68. The Secretariat had also not responded to previous requests concerning the development of performance indicators for support services. He would like to know what the Secretariat intended to do to ensure that the recommendation in paragraph 33D.8 of the Advisory Committee's report was fully implemented.

69. The Advisory Committee also drew attention to inefficiencies in the Secretariat's current procurement practices. His delegation supported the recommendation in paragraph 33D.16 regarding the need to establish standards for the acquisition and replacement of office equipment. It agreed that the establishment of a centralized procurement system was urgently required.

(Mr. Michalski, United States)

70. His delegation had noted on various occasions that some of the office equipment purchased had more capacity than necessary. It had also stated its belief that the Organization's technical innovation policies and practices were not satisfactory. While some parts of the Secretariat seemed to be investing in excess capacity, the Department of Conference Services appeared to lack necessary word-processing equipment. It was to be hoped that a more rational approach to technological innovations would be developed and implemented.

71. Paragraphs 33D.26 to 33D.28 of the Advisory Committee's report indicated that the level of services provided by the Telecommunications and Computer Operations Service would decline during the biennium 1992-1993. That decline was related, in part, to UNDP's decision to acquire its own mainframe computer capacity. Despite the expected decline in demand, however, added expenditure was proposed in order to replace existing computer capacity. While his delegation would not object to such investment, it would like some clarification from the Secretariat regarding the impact of the UNDP decision on the future operations of the Service and whether it would be possible to scale back its operating expenses and staff. His delegation was concerned that the apparent lack of cooperation between New York users might lead to an overall increase in expenditures for computer services required by the United Nations, UNDP and others. He asked whether the planned implementation of the Integrated Management Information System had been taken into account in drawing up investment proposals for the Telecommunications and Computer Operations Service. The budget for section 33D included a request for nearly $56 million for rented office space. No increase in those costs had been requested despite the proposed addition of regular budget posts. That restraint was commendable, but his delegation believed that overall costs for rental space should have been reduced as a result of the 12 per cent cut in staff. It would like to know whether any savings had been achieved in rental costs as a result of the staff reduction.

72. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that his delegation was concerned by the absence of any explanation of the resources that might be provided to field operations support under table 33D.19 of the budget document. Very little change was proposed in resources for that sector. Indeed, there was a slight decrease in temporary posts financed from extrabudgetary funds. His delegation believed that the resources of the Field Operations Division were over-stretched and its work had been greatly helped by the personal efforts and devotion of its staff. The Division's work related to one of the Organization's highest priorities and it was therefore difficult to understand why there was no explanation regarding the allocation of resources made available under the new arrangements in support of peace-keeping operations. In other parts of section 33, and in other sections of the budget, use of the peace-keeping support account seemed to be proposed. Something was clearly wrong when the Secretary-General's proposals made no mention of that account in regard to field operations support. His delegation would be interested to hear the views of the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division, and to discuss the matter with him further during the informal consultations.

73. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that he was currently in a position to reply to a number of questions left unanswered from earlier meetings. He suggested that he should deal with the replies to questions on earlier sections, and with those on section 33D, at the start of the next meeting on the proposed programme budget, before the Committee began its consideration of section 33E.

74. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would proceed as suggested.

75. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $206,115,000 under section 33D of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 33D would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
32nd meeting
held on
Tuesday, 12 November 1991
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 32nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 114: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/46/11 and Add.1 and 2)

1. Mr. SUZIEDELIS (Lithuania), speaking also on behalf of Estonia and Latvia, said that the proposed assessment rates for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were 0.06 per cent, 0.11 per cent and 0.13 per cent, respectively. It had also been proposed that the combined rate for the Baltic States (0.30 per cent) should be deducted from the rate proposed for the Soviet Union, thereby reducing it to 9.91 per cent. The Baltic States had great confidence in the Committee on Contributions and whole-heartedly supported its activities and it was their intention to shoulder their share of the expenses of the Organization.

2. The Baltic States had recently provided the United Nations Statistical Office with basic statistical data concerning their economies, which - though of central importance in assessing their contributions - did not convey a complete picture of their economies unless the broader economic and historical context of the current situation in those countries was taken into account. In particular, the real value of the Soviet currency (i.e., its dollar equivalent) and economic relations between the Baltic States and the Soviet Union were critical in determining those States' capacity to pay. The size of the Baltic States' economies in the 1980s and their relative wealth (calculated in United States dollars) constituted the essence of the assessment process. Since the Baltic States had not yet adopted their own currencies a new assessment must be based on a realistic valuation of the rouble, which would necessarily be somewhat arbitrary since neither the Baltic States nor the Soviet Union had achieved internal or external rouble convertibility. Soviet economists themselves recognized that the official exchange rate of 0.6 roubles to the dollar was distorted. That rate had not been universally applied since the 1970s. For example, in 1990 the Soviet Union had set up a new commercial exchange rate of 1.76 roubles to the dollar parallel to the official rate of 0.6 roubles per dollar. In the free market in Latvia, the rouble had declined as far as 90 to the dollar.

3. The Baltic States were faced with immense economic difficulties as a result of their tragic history. In 1939, they had possessed relatively healthy economies which had later been devastated by the Soviet and German invasions. The Sovietization process had not only crippled their economies but had led to the deportation or emigration of a large part of the population. In more recent times, the Baltic States' economies had suffered from the collapse of the Soviet economy. The Soviet practice of printing currency to cover budget deficits had led to spiralling inflation, which was only one of the many challenges facing the Baltic States in implementing a complete overhaul of their economic systems.

(Mr. Suziedelis, Lithuania)

4. In the light of the problems hampering the economic survival of the Baltic peoples, and of the fact that the official Soviet exchange rate at 0.6 roubles to the dollar was clearly artificial, the delegations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania felt that the assessment rates proposed by the Committee on Contributions were neither fair nor equitable. No realistic assessment could be based on an arbitrary currency valuation. An exhaustive professional analysis of the situation was needed to produce a fair assessment rate. The Governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania proposed that the Fifth Committee should defer any decision on their rates of assessment until the report of the evaluation mission of the International Monetary Fund, which was to take place shortly, had been received.

5. The Baltic peoples looked on membership in the United Nations as the final step in their long struggle to regain independence. As participants in the creation of a fundamentally different world order, they wished to demonstrate their commitment to the fulfilment of their international obligations. Their hope that they would be treated equitably must not be disappointed.

The meeting was suspended at 3.45 p.m. and resumed at 3.50 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 115: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/46/370 and 377; A/C.5/46/2, 4 and Add.1, 7, 9, 13, 16 and 21)

6. Mr. ANDERSEN (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the selection of United Nations staff, who represented all regions, cultures and philosophies of the world, should be based primarily on the criterion of the need to secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. Due regard should be paid also to recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible in order to preserve the Organization's international character and to increasing the number of women in posts subject to geographical distribution.

7. An even geographical distribution would enlarge interest in the United Nations, particularly in the current special circumstances. It was important that unrepresented and underrepresented States should be brought within their desirable ranges. The current desirable ranges system took into account the main criteria needed to ensure equitable geographical distribution: membership, population and contribution.

8. The fair and objective selection of qualified candidates was vital for the effective functioning of the United Nations. Experience had shown that competitive examinations were effective in recruiting young, highly qualified and motivated candidates. The expansion of that system was a step in the right direction, but it was disturbing that 19 exceptions should have been made to the principle of recruitment by examination at the P-1 and P-2 levels. His delegation would like a clarification from the Secretariat of the reasons for those exceptions. The Nordic delegations supported the plan to strengthen the Examinations and Tests Section.

(Mr. Andersen, Denmark)

9. The Nordic countries were looking forward to the report, to be submitted in 1992, on a comprehensive career development system, which would, it was to be hoped, focus on the demands of a changing environment and on the need for the United Nations, as a responsible employer, to give its staff the opportunity of advancement and further training within the Organization. The new challenges underlined the necessity of maintaining good management of the Organization's most important resource, its staff.

10. The Nordic delegations attached great importance to improving the status of women in the Secretariat and had listened with interest to the statement of the representative of the New York Staff Committee, who had put forward a strong case on that matter and on other aspects of the staff's concerns. Although there had been a slight increase in the number of women in the Secretariat, it was of paramount concern that every possible measure should be taken to meet the target of 35 per cent for 1995, which meant that the current year's rate of increase would have to be raised quite considerably. The Nordic delegations trusted that the Secretary-General would continue to do his utmost in that connection, and also emphasized the Member States' own responsibility in that regard for identifying qualified candidates and encouraging them to apply for vacant posts. The Nordic delegations intended to monitor the further steps taken in that connection closely and looked forward to the comprehensive evaluation and analysis of the main obstacles to the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat to be submitted to the General Assembly at its next session.

11. Respect for the privileges and immunities of officials was a prerequisite for the functioning of the United Nations system. Nevertheless, there had again been alarming reports of a constant high level of arrests, detentions and abductions of staff members, and even their dependants (A/C.5/46/4). The Nordic countries regarded that situation as intolerable and appealed strongly to the Governments directly or indirectly involved to fulfil their international obligations.

12. The Nordic countries wished to contribute to the best of their ability to the current process for the improvement of conditions for the United Nations staff. The Nordic delegations expressed their appreciation of the commitment and dedication shown by the staff in fulfilling the Organization's important tasks.

13. Mr. MAYCOCK (Barbados) said that the Minister of External Affairs of Barbados had passed comments and put questions to the Fifth Committee in 1976 that were still remarkably relevant in 1991. That fact emphasized the fruitlessness of the Committee's annual ritual consideration of personnel questions. The ritual began with a statement from the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management in which selective reference was made to provisions of previous General Assembly resolutions, explanations were offered as to why various mandates could not be fulfilled, and the implementation of imaginative new programmes was promised. Representatives, on the other hand, bemoaned the fact that the list of unrepresented or

(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

underrepresented Member States remained the same or had grown, referred to actions by the Secretariat that had affected them positively or negatively, and requested studies on proposals that would be to their advantage. The ritual ended with the adoption of resolutions that rehashed all previous resolutions, incorporated shopping lists from all interested parties and guaranteed a resumption of the ritual at the succeeding session of the General Assembly. It was time to stop the ritual and work together in a serious way to address all aspects of human resources management in the Organization. The Secretariat must provide information on the basis of which delegations could make implementable decisions; it must also make firm recommendations and give clear advice to the Fifth Committee; and it must be prepared to discuss problem areas in the Committee, at informal meetings if necessary.

14. There was room for better communication between Member States and the Secretariat. For example, his delegation's experience indicated that it would have been better if the problems encountered in the recruitment of women had been addressed during informal meetings of the Fifth Committee rather than at meetings between the Secretariat and regional groups. The information circulated at the meeting with the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States had been inaccurate, so far as Barbados was concerned, but he had had no response to his letter drawing that fact to the attention of the Secretariat.

15. Two other areas of concern to his delegation were to be found in document A/C.5/46/2. Paragraph 1 of that report referred to the General Assembly's decision to review desirable ranges at its forty-fifth session and seemed to suggest that no report would be forthcoming on a particular item unless the Secretariat was specifically requested to submit one. As a result, the Fifth Committee had apparently been expected to review the matter of desirable ranges at the forty-fifth session without benefit of Secretariat advice. In another paragraph of the same report, the response to a specific request in General Assembly resolution 45/239 A III, paragraph 3, for other possible methodological ways for the distribution of posts subject to geographical distribution among Member States was essentially the same. The conclusion in paragraph 34 of document A/C.5/46/2 was that "major adjustments could only be undertaken on the basis of further guidance by the General Assembly". His delegation was disappointed at the dismissal of the request in a single paragraph, without any evidence of an effort to address it seriously. Barbados was prepared to accept that the Secretariat's failure to respond was due to the pressure resulting from having to prepare comprehensive reports on an annual basis rather than to any desire to withhold or obscure information. If that was so, it would also be prepared to consider biennialization of the item, on condition that the Secretariat promised adequate reporting in exchange.

16. The Secretariat should study past resolutions in which various aspects of the composition of the Secretariat had been tackled. For instance, there were resolutions 37/235, 39/245 and subsequent resolutions which seemed to have

(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

embodied a practical approach to solving most of the human resource problems in the Organization.

17. His delegation would be very grateful if the Secretariat would seek to refine recruitment selection and promotion practices, with a view to meeting the objectives set in respect of candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, candidates from developing countries and women candidates. So far as possible, those categories should not be treated as mutually exclusive.

18. The Committee must break the ritual approach to personnel questions. It needed action, not apologies; it needed cooperation, not contention; and it needed progress, not promises. The careers and welfare of the staff had to be treated with the utmost seriousness.

AGENDA ITEM 112: JOINT INSPECTION UNIT (continued) (A/46/34, 89 and 219)

19. Mr. QUIJANO (Chairman, Joint Inspection Unit) expressed appreciation for delegations' positive and constructive remarks on the annual report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) (A/46/34) and on the contributions being made by the Unit to enhancing the efficiency of the United Nations and its affiliated agencies. JIU was pleased that its current annual report would be considered in depth at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, together with the corresponding report for 1992.

20. It was also happy that the Fifth Committee had decided to consider its individual reports in conjunction with the agenda items to which they related.

21. It had noted the support voiced by some delegations for its determination to pursue its dialogue with the General Assembly and the legislative bodies of other participating organizations, and with intergovernmental bodies such as the Advisory Committee, the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Board of Auditors. It had also noted the support voiced for its efforts to ensure timely consideration of its reports by participating organizations and the implementation of recommendations therein that might help to improve their functioning. It likewise noted the positive interest in its proposal to strengthen the Unit's investigative ability with national experts made available by Member States at no additional cost to the Organization. If Member States provided such experts, JIU would acquire the latest advances in managerial expertise to assist it in its work.

22. In the nearly 25 years that it had existed, JIU had made many studies that had been considered valuable by the United Nations and participating organizations, and had accumulated considerable experience in the sectors within its competence. The Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments had pointed out that JIU had prepared 12 reports on conference services alone, and that the Secretary-General would welcome its undertaking new reviews or updating earlier ones on such matters as the

(Mr. Quijano)

control and limitation of documentation, translation processes and the Organization's publishing policies and practices. The Unit was in a position to do that and intended to take up any request of that nature. It was also happy to note the references made in the Fifth Committee and other Committees to the contribution that JIU could make to any action aimed at reforming the United Nations and enhancing the Organization's efficiency. At a time of great social, political and economic change, when new problems were emerging to join the many unresolved ones already existing, every contribution was needed down to the most humble. If the General Assembly approved the Unit's programme of work, it was ready to respond positively, in line with its mandate, to any request from its participating organizations.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
33rd meeting
held on
Wednesday, 13 November 1991
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 33rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 107: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued) (A/46/6/Rev.1 and A/46/7)

AGENDA ITEM 108: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/46/16 and Add.1)

First reading (continued)

Section 33. Administration and management (continued)

Section 33E. Administration, Geneva

1. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that section 33E was one of the sections of the budget for which there was negative growth, calculated at minus 2.1 per cent. The proposed estimates were based on the current level of expenditure. There were two proposals for reclassification, one from P-2 to P-3 for the Treasurer of the United Nations Office at Geneva, and one from P-4 to P-5 for the Chief of Security. Those requests illustrated the difficulty of relating post level to function and responsibility and of establishing a universal benchmark for post classification.

2. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee recommended approval of both requests for reclassification (para. 33E.4). Regarding the proposed estimates, the Advisory Committee had concluded, on the basis of past performance and expenditure for Geneva, that a slightly lower figure would be appropriate. The Secretariat had adjusted the amounts in some areas in the light of past requirements but the Advisory Committee felt that the adjustments were on the conservative side (para. 33E.5). It accordingly recommended an overall reduction in the estimates for Geneva of some $4.6 million (para. 33E.6).

3. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $97,220,200 under section 33E of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading.

Section 33F. Administration, Vienna

4. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that administrative services for the United Nations Office at Vienna were provided by the Division of Administrative and Common Services, Vienna. That Division also provided some services for UNIDO and IAEA. Under the terms of General Assembly resolution 45/248, new arrangements were to be envisaged for administrative services as well as conference services in Vienna, and a report on the subject would be issued shortly. The proposed estimates for section 33E would therefore be substantially revised.

5. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, as the proposed estimates should be regarded as provisional, the Advisory Committee had no comment.

6. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that he looked forward to receiving the revised estimates. He noted, however, that in table 33F.7 of the budget document there was a discrepancy between the staffing of the Office of the Director at Vienna and that of the corresponding unit in Geneva. He hoped that point would be addressed in the forthcoming report.

7. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $35,124,500 under section 33F of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 33F would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

Section 33G. Administration, Nairobi

8. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $5,278,400 under section 33G of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading.

Section 33H. Internal audit services

9. Mr. COHEN (United States of America) said that his delegation was concerned about the auditing of expenditure financed from extrabudgetary resources. Assets of non-regular budget activities totalled more than $11 billion and the annual income of those activities was approximately $3.5 billion. Audit expenses were equivalent to about 0.05 per cent of total annual income, which was clearly insufficient. The Secretariat should take steps to enhance internal audit coverage of all non-regular budget activities managed by the Secretary-General. Donors and recipients of those programmes must be assured that the resources made available to the Organization were used as efficiently and effectively as possible. His delegation intended to make a specific proposal in that connection during the informal consultations.

10. Mr. TEIRLINCK (Belgium) said that paragraph 33H.1 of the budget document stated that the Internal Audit Division conducted independent audits in conformity with generally accepted auditing standards. He asked how that independence was guaranteed, to what authorities the Internal Audit Division's reports were submitted, and what the generally accepted standards referred to were. Like the Advisory Committee, his delegation welcomed the close cooperation between the Internal Audit Division and the External Auditors and agreed that it would be useful for the Advisory Committee to hold periodic meetings with the Division similar to its meetings with the Board of External Auditors. Such meetings would undoubtedly enhance the impact of the Internal Auditors' work.

11. Mr. MORDACQ (France) said that the Internal Audit Division was required to conduct independent audits. He wondered how using extrabudgetary resources for a body that was required to be independent could be justified.

12. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that he had taken note of the intention of the United States delegation to put forward a proposal during the informal consultations on the field covered by the Internal Audit Division. In response to the questions about the Division's independence, he could confirm only that that independence undoubtedly existed. He would provide a detailed reply to the Belgian representative's question about auditing standards at a later stage. The audit reports were sent to the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management and to the Controller who decided how they should be utilized. In reply to the representative of France, he said that the extrabudgetary resources referred to were not voluntary contributions but rather that share of the financing of the audit function paid for out of extrabudgetary resources. The funds were thus not linked to the goodwill of contributors. For example, the Division derived some of its resources from payments received from UNDP for services provided to it. Another part came from the 13 per cent charge levied on the various trust funds in respect of activities carried out on their behalf. They were therefore not subject to the arbitrary decision of contributors or to their goodwill but were a way of ensuring that audit functions important to the voluntary contributors were recompensed.

13. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $6,614,200 under section 33H of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 33H would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

Section 34. Special expenses

14. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that paragraphs 34.12 to 34.14 of the Advisory Committee's report dealt with after-service health insurance. The Advisory Committee had previously requested the Secretariat to establish a mechanism whereby the cost of after-service health insurance could be shared between regular budget and extrabudgetary accounts in view of the fact that the participants in the scheme had been engaged in both regular budget and extrabudgetary-funded activities. The Secretariat was currently working out a methodology and the Advisory Committee trusted that a report would shortly be submitted to it providing for a simple but effective methodology for apportioning the costs of after-service health insurance between the regular budget and the various extrabudgetary accounts. The Advisory Committee had noted the Secretariat's belief that the implementation of the Integrated Management Information System would facilitate the establishment of such a methodology (para. 34.14).

15. Regarding interorganizational security measures, he recalled that, in response to the Advisory Committee's recommendation, the Secretary-General had been authorized to enter into commitments in an amount not exceeding $300,000 in the biennium 1990-1991 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/203 on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses. Those funds were to be shared between the United Nations and the specialized agencies which shared in the cost of security services provided by the Secretary-General on their behalf. He believed that a proposal would shortly be submitted to the Advisory Committee to review the adequacy of that amount for the biennium 1992-1993 in view of the larger than expected expenditure incurred for security measures for staff in the field.

16. Mr. COHEN (United States of America) said that his delegation was extremely concerned at the increasing cost to the Organization of the after-service health insurance programme. When that programme was first established, the total cost to Member States had been $25,000. The proposed budget for 1992-1993 estimated the cost at more than $17,000,000. Given the increasing number of retirees and the rising cost of health insurance, overall expenses would continue to grow and would reach unacceptable levels. He noted that the comparator civil service did not subsidize the health insurance costs of its retired staff. Group plans were available but all premiums were paid by the former employees. The United Nations should follow a similar practice. As a first step, his delegation proposed that the share of costs paid by Member States should be reduced to one third of the total. That would reduce the appropriation requested for the after-service health insurance programme for the biennium 1992-1993 to approximately $8.5 million.

17. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that it was correct, as stated in paragraph 34.5 of the Advisory Committee's report, that no resource growth had been proposed for the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) for 1992-1993. He recalled that his delegation had been puzzled by the absence of any comment by the Secretary-General in the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) on the resource requirements of JIU, which had submitted its own cost estimates. On the other hand, in General Assembly resolution 45/237, paragraph 3, the Secretary-General was requested to review, in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993, the research and analytical capacity of the JIU secretariat in order to enhance its performance. Nevertheless, the Secretary-General had proposed no resource growth for the biennium. The question was whether the provisions of article 20 of the JIU statute had been observed. According to the statute, those budget estimates should be submitted to the General Assembly together with the report thereon by the ACC, and with the comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee. His delegation had already made it clear that, at the current session at least, it was unable to entertain the JIU request. It had proposed, in order to expedite consideration of the issue, that the General Assembly should take note of the JIU proposals and request the Advisory Committee to examine them in the context of improving the working methods and enhancing the performance of the JIU, followed by a report to the General

(Mr. Inomata, Japan)

Assembly by the Secretary-General. His delegation's proposal still stood and should be discussed at the current session, either under the item on the Joint Inspection Unit or, perhaps more properly, in the informal consultations on the relevant section of the budget.

18. Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan) said that the estimates for the International Computing Centre (ICC) offered an opportunity to review the functioning and performance of the Centre with particular reference to its accessibility to Member States, especially at Geneva. His delegation attached great importance to the development of new technological facilities and their accessibility to member countries. Access by Permanent Missions to those facilities through ICC was a difficult and complicated procedure, involving not only normal telephone lines but a commercial packet switching network for which Member States were billed separately. ICC, which was required to coordinate the database facilities in Geneva and whose budget was subject to review and approval by the General Assembly, possessed a Board which brought together nearly 20 United Nations agencies but did not include any Member State or representative of a Member State. Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/70, which had been introduced by Pakistan, and adopted by consensus, requested the Secretary-General to prepare, in consultation with representatives of States, a study analysing the causes of the present situation with respect to United Nations informatics systems and providing an outline of a rapid solution to the problem. That review of the operation of ICC and of the computer and database focal points was currently being discussed at meetings between the Secretariat and a group of permanent representatives with a view to removing the difficulties faced by Member States as soon as possible. The key question which remained to be answered was why Member States were not represented on the Board of ICC and how ICC intended to remedy the constraints and difficulties faced by Member States in going through the complicated procedures of its network. He hoped some comment would be received from ICC before any appropriation was approved. Information technology and access to it was a key factor in delegations' work and the point of view of Member States had been disregarded too long.

19. Mr. KARBUCZKY (Hungary) endorsed the views expressed by the representative of Pakistan. His delegation hoped that the report requested by Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/70 would be prepared in the foreseeable future on the basis of dialogue with Member States. In his delegation's view, action should be taken to ensure that whatever was recorded electronically by ICC was made available to all interested missions. Recording was the more expensive part of the procedure but it was pointless unless the data recorded were made available to interested parties, preferably on CD-ROM. In future, urgent up-to-date information should be accessible on-line and the rest should be made available through CD-ROM. Standardization was very important and there should be a single standard software which provided access to the whole system.

20. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said, in reply to the representative of Japan, that the process of preparing the budget for JIU had been in conformity both with its Statute and with normal budgetary procedure. Proposals had been received from JIU which included a request for additional resources. That request had not been supported during the internal review process and the ACC body concerned had indicated that increased resources in any particular area would have to be offset by a decrease elsewhere. He therefore believed that the Secretary-General's proposal had been drawn up in accordance with normal budgetary procedures.

21. He was grateful to the representatives of Pakistan and Hungary for raising an important matter. He was aware of the resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council, for which a statement of financial implications had not been prepared at the time. A report was to be produced on the subject, which was being taken very seriously in the Secretariat. The comments made would be conveyed to the unit preparing the report. The question of access by Member States to information generated in the Secretariat, on which there was no clear policy, was also involved. The budget proposals provided another opportunity to examine the whole problem of access to information, including access to the optical disc system, from all angles.

22. The proposal made by the representative of the United States of America on the subject of after-service health insurance would be taken up in the informal consultations. It was up to the General Assembly to decide how health insurance costs should be divided between the Organization and its staff. It was a very complicated question. The increase in such costs was due not only to the numbers of retired staff but also to the costs of health insurance in different countries.

23. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $44,807,600 under section 34 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 34 would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

Section 35: Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance

24. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that a progress report on the construction of conference facilities at Addis Ababa and Bangkok had been issued as document A/C.5/46/22, but did not affect the estimates for those projects contained in section 35. The proposals in the section did not reflect every need but simply listed those projects that it was proposed to implement as a matter of priority.

25. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) drew particular attention to paragraphs 35.3 and 35.4 of the Advisory Committee's report, which gave its reasons for not endorsing the Secretary-General's suggestion that the total amount requested be placed in a separate account so that any unexpended balance could be carried forward from biennium to biennium. Because the General Assembly would provide the

(Mr. Mselle)

resources required in each biennium if adequate supporting information was provided, the Advisory Committee stressed the importance of providing, at the outset, all the information about the anticipated cost and duration of a long-term project that was likely to span more than one biennium.

26. In paragraph 35.10 of its report, the Advisory Committee noted that the estimates for alterations and improvements were presented as a list of priority projects but delays and changes in priority could affect their implementation. It therefore recognized that some of the resources allocated might eventually be redeployed. In paragraphs 35.13 and 35.14 of its report, the Advisory Committee noted the proposed provision for the development of a master plan for all United Nations facilities at Headquarters and for the preparation of a 12-year programme of priority renovations. Its recommendation that the study be undertaken in a more economical fashion was intended to encourage a more realistic approach, resulting in feasible proposals, rather than an over-ambitious approach which resulted in proposals that could not be implemented.

27. In paragraphs 35.15 and 35.16 of its report, after considering certain proposals for new wiring at Headquarters and in Geneva, the Advisory Committee took the view that a more gradual approach to the work should suffice and allow savings to be made. Given the volume of resources requested for those and other projects, the Committee believed that restraint should be exercised in respect of alterations, improvements and major maintenance so long as major construction projects such as those in Addis Ababa and Bangkok continued.

28. An instance of resources being redeployed to meet new priorities was the commitment of $1 million, during the current biennium, to begin installing a computerized security access system at Headquarters. In paragraphs 35.18 and 35.19 of its report, the Advisory Committee noted that it had been informed of the commitment only after it had been made and expressed regret that it had not been consulted beforehand. While recognizing the importance of improved security arrangements, the Advisory Committee had strong reservations about the procedure adopted by the Secretariat. Finally, although it had not recommended reductions in the estimates for alterations and improvements at regional centres, the Advisory Committee urged that projects undertaken there be implemented as economically as possible.

29. Mr. BENNETT (United States of America) said that his delegation would comment later on the status of the construction projects in Addis Ababa and Bangkok. For the moment, it wished only to record its continuing reservations about the construction of the conference centre in Addis Ababa, which it had opposed from the outset. It also endorsed the Advisory Committee's views on the proposed master plan for facilities at Headquarters. It assumed that the $750,000 requested for the study would be used to engage an outside consulting firm. His delegation would like to know why internal staff could not undertake the project, in view of the strong opposition in the Secretariat to his country's proposal to engage an outside consulting firm for a study of the Department of Conference Services.

30. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that the redeployment of resources to which the Advisory Committee had taken exception in paragraphs 35.18 and 35.19 of its report was symptomatic of the Secretariat's approach to the budget section under consideration. It was difficult to see how the current situation could continue, because the non-implementation of projects for which estimates had been approved and the redeployment of funds without notice put the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee in a difficult position. The Secretary-General's suggestion that the total amount requested under the section be placed in a separate account, so that unexpended balances could be carried forward, would create a similar situation with regard to alterations, improvements and major maintenance as already existed in respect of construction projects such as those in Addis Ababa and Bangkok. Appropriations were at the Secretariat's disposal, of course, but Member States were interested in how they were spent. His delegation therefore endorsed the Advisory Committee's observations in paragraph 35.4.

31. There was a need for more transparency in the management of funds allocated under section 35. For example, the request for $3.7 million for the first phase of the project to rewire the Headquarters complex (A/46/6/Rev.1, para. 35.17 (a) (iii)) raised the question of how many subsequent phases there might be. His delegation was very uneasy at the prospect of the Fifth Committee approving the rewiring piecemeal. He therefore hoped that the Secretariat would heed the Advisory Committee's observations in paragraph 35.4 of its report and present a comprehensive picture of projects from the outset. Otherwise, the current situation would continue and projects costing millions of dollars might last for many years with Member States being expected to finance them automatically.

32. Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda) said that he agreed with the previous speaker's remarks about the need for more transparency in the management of funds allocated under the section, in the interests of Member States. He also agreed that the Advisory Committee needed to have as much information as possible, from the outset, about projects that were likely to last more than one biennium, so that it could form a clear picture of their likely duration and the various factors involved. He welcomed the publication of the report of the Secretary-General on the construction of conference facilities at Addis Ababa and Bangkok (A/C.5/46/22) and the fact that it advocated the same level of resources as previously. He hoped that there would be less opposition to the project in Addis Ababa than had originally been the case.

33. With reference to paragraph 35.10 of the Advisory Committee's report, even though the redeployment of resources was to be expected, there should be some mechanism for reporting projected changes in the interests of greater transparency and to ensure that they were not made lightly. The Secretary-General's proposal to develop a master plan for all United Nations facilities had merit and he hoped that the restriction of the plan to facilities at Headquarters could be removed. However, he noted the Advisory Committee's concern that a 12-year plan might be over-ambitious and suggested that it might be confined to the shorter period of the medium-term plan, if necessary. Finally, he shared the Advisory Committee's concern at the

(Mr. Irumba, Uganda)

Secretariat's failure to notify its commitment of $1 million to the installation of a security access system at Headquarters in advance and hoped that it would be more communicative in future.

34. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that, as in the case of sections 32 and 33, his delegation questioned the appropriateness of requesting appropriations for non-essentials in view of the Organization's cash-flow situation. However, he hoped that the Committee would be able to arrive at a rigorously costed approach to section 35 on the assumption that all Member States would fulfil their obligations. Not all of the projects proposed had always enjoyed his country's support, which had been contingent on the adoption of General Assembly resolution 41/213. Its continued support remained conditional on respect for that resolution. Referring to paragraphs 35.18 and 35.19 of the Advisory Committee's report, he underlined its recommendation that all individuals concerned should be well informed regarding the new security system before it was implemented. The Fifth Committee should start the process of informing those affected, who might find the use of electronic identity cards somewhat cumbersome.

35. Mr. MORDACQ (France) emphasized that the real rate of growth under section 35 had been calculated at zero. His delegation commended the Secretary-General's intention to develop a master plan for long-term maintenance and capital improvement, which was standard practice at most organizations. On the other hand, it also understood the Advisory Committee's concern that the final plan might be too ambitious for the Organization. Nevertheless, it should be possible to find the golden mean, and an attempt should be made to do so.

36. He hoped that ACABQ would be able to provide further information supporting its objection to the Secretary-General's proposal to place the total amount requested under section 35 in a separate account. For expenditures that were by definition non-recurrent, funds not spent in one year were not included in the base for the next. Thus, in the case of appropriations for construction work, there was a special procedure for carrying forward any unexpended balance. In the case of alterations, improvements and major maintenance, unspent funds were refunded to the Member States, so there was no risk of their being included in a future base. He could therefore see no reason why it would not be technically feasible to have a separate account for all projects of a multi-year nature.

37. Mr. TEIRLINCK (Belgium) supported the statement made by the representative of France. There was certainly a need for in-depth discussion during informal consultations of the issues raised.

38. Mr. KARBUCZKY (Hungary), referring to the need for additional office space and conference facilities at Vienna, requested the Secretariat to look at possible options for achieving the best possible use of office space and at the future availability of additional facilities, bearing in mind cost-effectiveness and the efficiency of the Organization as a whole.

39. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) wished to emphasize that, while the Secretary-General could alter the priorities adopted in the programme budget in the event of emergencies or unforeseen circumstances, he did not have complete flexibility in the use of resources provided under a given section. As a general comment, he informed the Committee that the Office of General Services had only one architect and one engineer; hence the need for outside experts. Concerning the query of the representative of France, he said that the use of a separate account was still being negotiated in the context of agenda item 104 and the report of ACABQ on the question of unliquidated obligations (A/46/601), and that the Chairman of ACABQ had suggested extending the expiration period for unliquidated obligations from one to two years. He would therefore revert to the matter during the informal consultations.

40. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that the question of unliquidated obligations had nothing to do with the approval of appropriations under section 35 and should be totally dissociated from the discussion of that section. Furthermore, he had never seen any such proposal by ACABQ.

41. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $97,756,100 under section 35 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 35 would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

Section 36. Staff assessment

42. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $326,373,100 under section 36 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading.

Income section 1. Income from staff assessment

43. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the total estimate under income section 1 was larger than that under income section 36 because section 1 included income from staff assessment derived from the emoluments of staff who were charged to revenue-producing activities under income section 3.

44. The estimate of $331,606,400 recommended by the Advisory Committee under income section 1 for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading.

Income section 2. General income

45. The estimate of $62,690,500 recommended by the Advisory Committee under income section 2 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading.

Income section 3. Services to the public

46. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the period 1992-1997 was the first time that services to the public had been included as a programme of the medium-term plan. Drawing the attention of the Committee to paragraphs IS3.1 and IS3.2 of the budget proposals, he stressed that while the activities included under income section 3 were of a commercial nature, their primary purpose was to promote, publicize and disseminate the work and achievements of the United Nations.

47. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that ACABQ recommended an increase in the estimate under income section 3 because it did not think that the three local office posts referred to in paragraphs IS3.7 and IS3.8 of its report (A/46/7) should be reclassified. With respect to the comprehensive mail order and inventory system, he regretted that it was not functioning as expected and would have to be redesigned. He stressed the importance of achieving a workable design for the new system and requested that its implementation should be coordinated with the introduction of the Integrated Management Information System. He also drew attention to the Advisory Committee's comments on United Nations publications, contained in paragraphs IS3.19 and IS3.20 of its report.

48. Mr. MORDACQ (France) said that the Secretary-General's position in paragraphs IS3.1 and IS3.2 of the proposed programme budget contradicted the policy expressed in paragraph IS3.97, which stated that the activities under subprogramme 4, Services to visitors, were carried out with a view to recovering full costs and making a profit if possible. It was somewhat surprising that Member States were being asked to pay for tourists to visit the United Nations. Those services, as well as the activities in subprogramme 3, Sale of United Nations publications, should be made profitable.

49. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) entirely agreed with the representative of France. Since, as indicated in paragraph IS3.25 of the Advisory Committee's report, the largest deficit for visitor services was at Vienna, those services should receive priority attention. He wondered what action the Secretary-General planned to take in that regard.

50. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that he personally believed that the emphasis under income section 3 should be placed on paragraphs IS3.1 and IS3.2 of the proposed programme budget. He did not know what measures were planned to attract tourists or reduce costs at Vienna.

51. The estimate of $7,480,300 recommended by the Advisory Committee under income section 3 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with income section 3 would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

52. The CHAIRMAN raised the subject of sections 1, 6 and 27, on which debate had been postponed pending the availability of further information. After a procedural discussion in which Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) and Mr. CONMY (Ireland) took part, he suggested that, in view of the importance of completing the first reading as soon as possible, a decision should be taken on those sections at the earliest possible meeting, on the understanding that acceptance of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee would be provisional and that all sections would be treated equally.

53. Ms. VOURINEN (Finland) recalled that, during general debate on the proposed programme budget, the Nordic countries had expressed reservations concerning the reductions recommended under sections 33D, 33E and 35. As those countries had refrained from repeating their comments during the first reading, she sought reassurance from the Chairman that all points made in general debate could be taken up in informal consultations.

54. The CHAIRMAN reiterated the understanding of the Committee that any issues that had been raised concerning any of the sections would be considered in informal consultations.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.